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JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Secretary-General

The General Assembly, at its twenty-seventh session, requested the Secretary-General to submit annually to the Assembly a succinct report on those major recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit affecting the United Nations which had not been implemented, together with the reasons therefor. At its thirty-second session, the Assembly adopted resolution 32/199 of 21 December 1977 in which it decided that future reports of the Secretary-General on implementation of the recommendations of the Unit should provide concise information only with regard to those reports which have been indicated by it to be of interest to the Assembly, one of its Main Committees or its other subsidiary organs. Further, in its resolution 42/218 of 21 December 1987, the Assembly requested all bodies of the United Nations system to examine closely those reports of the Joint Inspection Unit which were within their respective areas of competence and to comment, as appropriate, on the recommendations contained therein. The General Assembly has also, in its resolution 44/184 of 19 December 1989, requested the Secretary-General to standardize the format of his reports relating to the work and recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in order to include therein the recommendations of the Unit and any decisions of the Assembly and other governing bodies, before making his comments. In addition, the Assembly urged the Secretary-General, in preparing his report, and the Unit, in preparing its annual report, to coordinate their efforts in order to present to the Assembly the maximum possible information on implementation of the

* A/46/50.

recommendations of the Unit. The present report is submitted in accordance with those decisions, and includes detailed information on the status of implementation of the recommendations contained in six reports of the Joint Inspection Unit.

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	REPORTING ON THE PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS OF UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMMES: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND MANAGEMENT REVIEW COMPONENTS	1 - 17	4
II.	EVALUATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THREE AFRICAN LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (BURKINA FASO, BURUNDI, UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA)	18 - 35	10
III.	REVIEW OF UNITED NATIONS PUBLIC INFORMATION NETWORKS: REORGANIZATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION	36 - 46	15
IV.	REVIEW OF UNITED NATIONS PUBLIC INFORMATION NETWORKS: UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRES	47 - 69	20
V.	PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES AIMED AT A MORE EQUITABLE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SOURCES OF PROCUREMENT FOR TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROJECTS	70 - 75	26
VI.	FROM THE OPTICAL DISC PILOT PROJECT AT THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA TO AN OPTICAL DISC SYSTEM FOR THE UNITED NATIONS	76 - 82	28

I. REPORTING ON THE PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS OF UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMMES: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND MANAGEMENT REVIEW COMPONENTS

1. A report on this subject was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-third session (see A/43/124). The report contained four recommendations, three of which were addressed to the Secretary-General and one (recommendation 3) to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Fifth Committee and the Committee on Conferences. The related comments of the Secretary-General are contained in document A/43/124/Add.1.

Restructured programme performance report

> Recommendation 1: The Secretary-General should replace the present programme performance report with a report that analyses progress made and results achieved against the established objectives for each United Nations subprogramme. This report should be submitted concurrently with the biennial proposed programme budgets, in order to finally join "results" information with "intentions" information as intergovernmental bodies have long sought.

2. In section III, paragraph 2, of its resolution 43/219 of 21 December 1988, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the methodological and practical aspects concerning implementation of the recommendation with some specific examples using the sample form contained in annex II to the Inspector's report.

3. In response to that request, the Secretary-General submitted to the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly a report on the matter (A/44/233). In the report, the Secretary-General outlined the difficulties and limitations of implementing the recommendation. He also recommended to maintain the current practice of reporting performance while continuing to refine the methodology and improve the content of the report.

4. The General Assembly, having considered the report of the Secretary-General, adopted resolution 44/194 of 21 December 1989. Section III of the resolution reads:

> "The General Assembly
>
> "1. Requests the Secretary-General to continue to improve the methodology for monitoring and reporting on programme performance so that implementation rates may more meaningfully reflect programme performance and that a better comparison may be made between actual delivery of final output and commitments set out in the programme narratives of the approved programme budget;

"2. Also requests the Secretary-General to develop a methodology for the harmonization of programme performance and budget performance reporting".

5. This request of the General Assembly was clearly at variance with the thrust of recommendation 1. The latter perceived performance reporting as a measurement of results achieved against the objectives of the subprogrammes in the medium-term plan, that is, in conjunction with self-evaluation. However, resolution 44/194 referred specifically to a comparison between actual delivery of final outputs and commitments set out in the narratives of the approved programme budget. Furthermore, the resolution made no reference to any change in the cycle of reporting performance. From that point onward, the Secretariat did not have any mandate to pursue further recommendation 1 of the Joint Inspection Unit.

6. In this connection, it should be noted that the subsequent recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its 30th session of May 1990, in conjunction with its review of the Secretary-General's report on programme performance for 1988-1989, did not refer to the approach proposed by the Joint Inspection Unit for reporting performance. 1/ The same omission is also noted in the recent General Assembly resolution 45/253 of 21 December 1990 (see paras. 2 and 3 of sect. II).

Implementation of the monitoring and internal evaluation systems

Recommendation 2: The Secretary-General should

(a) Assess the staffing of the Central Evaluation Unit (currently only three Professional staff) to ensure that it has the specific staff resources necessary to carry out required evaluation studies and the evaluation system management responsibilities set out for it by the Committee for Programme and Coordination in 1983;

(b) Add at least one more Professional to the two Professional staff in the small Central Monitoring Unit to enable it to finish designing and installing the monitoring system, and then to assume the full analytical, oversight and operational role originally intended for it;

(c) Strengthen evaluation activities and the quality of performance and results reporting in at least those few units which expend a majority of total United Nations resources but have thus far received little evaluation attention: UNRWA, the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development, UNHCR (to a much lesser extent) and - because of their policy and operational importance if not resource size - the regional commissions;

(d) Determine and report on which specific intergovernmental bodies - beyond the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee - are responsible for programme formulation and review of programme implementation for each United Nations programme, and take action to ensure wherever possible that all these bodies regularly receive and review the relevant medium-term plan, programme budget and programme performance report documents or sections as an agenda item;

(e) Since the new self-evaluation system will depend heavily on the skills of Secretariat staff who have never received appropriate training, establish and implement as a high priority within the formal United Nations training programme a specific course in programme design and evaluation for all programme and subprogramme managers.

7. In 1983, in partial pursuance of its recommendation concerning the strengthening of the evaluation capacity of units and systems, 2/ the Committee for Programme and Coordination recommended that the Central Evaluation Unit's responsibilities should include nine functions. 3/ These functions are: (a) establishing evaluation policies, concepts and objectives; (b) defining coverage of the evaluation system and setting standards of quality; (c) providing methodological guidance; (d) providing procedural guidance, check-lists and formats; (e) monitoring quality and compliance and supervising systematic implementation of management-oriented evaluation carried out by programme managers; (f) coordinating evaluation planning; (g) providing training and orientation; (h) providing central information services; and (i) carrying out in-depth evaluations for intergovernmental bodies.

8. The Joint Inspection Unit reiterated its views in paragraph 143 of its report (A/43/124) that "even if the Central Evaluation Unit were to be given only the modest proportional evaluation staffing levels found systemwide, it should have about 15 Professional staff posts". Six Professional posts are currently available for the Unit. As the Joint Inspection Unit noted in paragraph 129 of the report, the in-depth evaluations for the Committee for Programme and Coordination consume the large part of staff resources of the Unit. Within the resources available, however, efforts have been made to carry out other functions recommended by the Committee. For example, in collaboration with the Training Service of the Office of Human Resources Management, the Unit organized and conducted three self-evaluation training workshops at Headquarters during 1989. In 1990, similar workshops were held at Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Geneva and Vienna. During the workshops and ad hoc briefing sessions, methodological guidance was provided. The Central Evaluation Unit is now in the process of establishing a database that will contain information on self-evaluation, including findings of self-evaluation exercises; this should facilitate the dissemination of lessons learned from self-evaluation. The issuance of Evaluation Newsletter will be regularized, to the extent the staff resources permit, at two issues per year.

9. As at March 1991, about 100 self-evaluation reports had been received by the Central Evaluation Unit. General findings from most of those self-evaluations have been summarized in two reports of the Secretary-General on the application of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives (A/43/179 and A/45/204). The quality of these self-evaluations vary. As part of an effort to set standards for self-evaluations, the Unit is making more detailed analyses of these reports, particularly their coverage and methodologies. The results of these analyses will be included in the third report on the application of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session in accordance with rule 106.4 (h) of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. The report will also include guidelines for self-evaluation for the medium-term plan period 1992-1997, and proposals for the calender of in-depth evaluations to be submitted to the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

10. In compliance with General Assembly resolutions 36/228 B of 18 December 1981 and 37/234 of 21 December 1982, section II, the Secretary-General issued several reports on the strengthening of the United Nations evaluation units and systems, including information on the functions of the evaluation units of the United Nations. 4/ Since 1986, the year when the last of such reports was issued, there have been new developments. A follow-up report will therefore be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session in compliance with paragraph 1 (a) of resolution 36/228 B, which requested the Secretary-General to specify the responsibilities and tasks of the United Nations evaluation units.

11. As stated above, the Secretariat is expected to complete the work towards setting standards for quality of evaluation, establishing guidelines for self-evaluation for the period 1992-1997, and specifying the responsibilities and tasks of the United Nations evaluation units, by early 1992. After the completion of the work, the Secretary-General will be in a position to assess the staffing of the Central Evaluation Unit to ensure that it has the required resources necessary to carry out fully all nine functions set out by the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

12. Efforts are continuing to strengthen evaluation activities in entities responsible for a majority of total United Nations resources. For example, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has made considerable progress in establishing a formal evaluation programme starting with the creation in mid-1987 of the Programme Planning and Evaluation Office. Basic instructions on the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the Agency's medium-term plan were issued in December 1989 and updated further in 1990. The instruction enumerates the policies, standards and procedures governing programme planning and evaluation activities. The overall performance of Agency programmes and administrative and management functions is required to be evaluated at the end of each year, including a summary report by each unit

to the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. In addition, UNRWA prepared an Agency-wide evaluation plan for the biennium 1990-1991, and a new plan for the biennium 1992-1993 is under development. The plan includes specific evaluations scheduled for Agency subprogrammes on health, education and social services, as well as selected administrative and management activities. For example, an evaluation of internal Agency reports is currently being conducted in all offices at UNRWA headquarters and in the field. UNRWA is also providing regular workshops for its field staff in the use of performance indicators and other management techniques to improve the evaluation process.

13. The Policy, Programming and Development Planning Division of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development coordinates evaluation within the Department, while its various substantive offices are responsible for participating in evaluation activities related to specific technical cooperation projects, and programme and sectoral reviews. As the focal point for evaluation, the Division cooperates closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) concerning policy and procedures for monitoring and evaluation, and related matters such as training to enhance the Department's capacity for evaluation. For example, the Department participated in 46 in-depth evaluations of projects in 1990. In order to facilitate the utilization of project evaluation findings, the Department established in 1988 a data bank that records such data as project problems and achievements, major recommendations, lessons learned, comments on the evaluation report itself and information on the implementation of recommendations. The Department continues to keep under review ways of strengthening its evaluation activities, in accordance with the advice of intergovernmental bodies.

14. The Central Evaluation Unit of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is responsible for UNHCR evaluation activities. The Evaluation Committee, an internal committee of UNHCR, determines evaluation activities and reviews evaluation conclusions and recommendations. It also directs the work of the Evaluation Unit. During the period 1988-1989, 15 in-depth evaluations were carried out by UNHCR, and conclusions and recommendations made during the evaluations were used by the Committee to improve and reshape UNHCR field operations as needed. Since 1988, significant steps have been taken to strengthen evaluation in UNHCR. The function has been moved to the Executive Office, and the membership of the Evaluation Committee has been enlarged to include key senior staff. In addition, the Evaluation Committee's procedures have been more precisely defined to ensure follow-up on decisions taken by the Committee. Finally, the emphasis in evaluation has been shifted away from less effective self-evaluation, primarily of projects by the project manager, towards more rigorous in-depth evaluations by the UNHCR Evaluation Unit or external consultants aimed at serving as a catalyst for major organizational changes.

15. The secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has made considerable progress in establishing its self-evaluation system. It provides information on the results of self-evaluations of its programmes to the ECA

Commission. The reports submitted to the Commission in 1989 and 1990 (E/ECA/CM.15/32 and E/ECA/CM.16/30) contained the findings and conclusions of self-evaluations that had critically examined the relevance and effectiveness of subprogrammes and recommendations based on the results of the evaluation. The secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) established an operations evaluation unit in the Office of the Executive Secretary in 1984. During the bienniums 1986-1987 and 1988-1989, ESCAP conducted 27 self-evaluations of its subprogrammes. In the biennium 1990-1991, another 25 subprogrammes are scheduled to be evaluated. Furthermore, ESCAP undertook in-depth evaluations of projects, programmes and meetings. Self-evaluation activities have begun in the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in development issues and policies, transport, communications and tourism and statistics. Some evaluation activities had commenced in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) prior to the Gulf War; a one-week training seminar conducted by a staff member of the Central Evaluation Unit was scheduled for August 1990 but cancelled due to circumstances. Evaluation activities are under study in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Improved decision-making information

Recommendation 4: The Secretary-General should give high priority in current technological innovation efforts to establishing a computerized management information system that integrates both performance and financial information for timely and effective programme decision-making at the Secretariat and intergovernmental body levels.

16. The General Assembly, by its resolution 43/217 of 21 December 1988, accepted the Secretary-General's proposal for the project contained in his report (A/C.5/43/24) and approved the implementation of the first phase of an integrated management information system (IMIS) project over a period of three and a half years. At its forty-fourth session, the General Assembly considered a progress report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/45/20), in which the concept of the system was described and the general work plan for the first phase of the project until the end of 1992 was outlined.

17. At the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General reported (A/C.5/45/20) on the benefits to be derived from the project and on how it would contribute to the reform process mandated by General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986. Among other benefits, the design of IMIS provides for built-in capability to analyse programme performance in conjunction with relevant financial data. By its resolution 45/248 A (IX) of 21 December 1990, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the IMIS project.

II. EVALUATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THREE AFRICAN LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (BURKINA FASO, BURUNDI, UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA)

18. A report on this subject was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session (see A/45/76). The report contained 11 recommendations addressed to organizations of the United Nations system involved in rural development activities. The related comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination are contained in document A/45/76/Add.1.

> Recommendation 1: Policy. United Nations system organizations involved in rural development activities should reconsider whether their policy with respect to rural development requires clarification or modification. In particular they should consider whether the beneficiaries of their rural development activities should be better defined (i.e. whether more emphasis at the policy level should be put on activities targeted to the poorest of the poor or to specific underprivileged groups).

19. The organizations concerned supported this recommendation. Many of their technical assistance project documents already provided some form of framework for defining target groups as such according to geographical location, gender and occupation. The organizations concerned intended to intensify their efforts, where possible, to pay careful attention to the definition and identification of the beneficiaries wherever rural development activities were initiated. They were also of the view that an effort must be made to also involve the local community in defining beneficiaries.

> Recommendation 2: Policy. In recognition of the fact that helping the poor to help themselves entails a different philosophy and approach from habitual "top-down" activities, rural development activities at the grass-roots level should be clearly differentiated from normal or traditional technical cooperation activities. Special sets of policy directives and operational procedures applicable to rural development activities should be developed in each agency and through the Administrative Committee on Coordination Task Force on Rural Development, bearing in mind the need to keep operational arrangements as decentralized, simple and flexible as possible. All concerned organizations should also consider whether the project approach is still valid for grass-roots rural development activities.

20. The organizations concerned were basically in agreement with this recommendation. They pointed out that the importance of "helping the poor to help themselves" was not limited to technical cooperation assistance in the field of rural development, and that the need to involve beneficiaries to the extent possible in the formulation and implementation of technical cooperation projects in general was a principle clearly accepted in the United Nations system.

21. Policy directives and operational procedures on rural development activities already existed in certain organizations concerned and were under constant review with a view to further improvement whenever necessary. They were periodically reviewed by the Administrative Committee on Coordination Task Force on Rural Development. The Committee agreed that it was necessary to keep operational arrangements on rural development as decentralized, simple and flexible as possible.

22. The Administrative Committee on Coordination wished to clarify that the organizations of the United Nations system were not applying the "top-down" project design approach only, and "habitually", to all rural development activities. The inference that the "project approach" was, by definition, synonymous with the "top-down" design approach was neither historically nor conceptually proven. Present efforts by the organizations of the United Nations system were focused on diverse rural development needs and problems with different strategies and approaches identified as best fit in solving them. The Administrative Committee on Coordination agreed, however, on the need for careful application of the project approach to grass-roots rural development activities.

Recommendation 3: Alternatives to the project approach for rural development.

(i) The general philosophy is to move progressively away from the top-down, blueprint, supply approach towards a more decentralized, flexible, participating, learning process, demand approach. Alternatives (a) and (b), outlined in paragraph 104, should be applied where possible by United Nations system organizations; alternative (c) should be tested on an experimental basis in a number of developing countries. Such experiments should be carefully evaluated. The Administrative Committee on Coordination Task Force on Rural Development should undertake a study to determine the scope for generalization of this new approach.

(ii) In order to improve coordination of rural development activities at the field level, the Governments concerned and the organizations participating in rural development should take the initiative of setting up a "rural development coordinating committee" in which the Government, the multilateral agencies, the main bilateral operational agencies and non-governmental organizations would be represented. The main tasks of this committee would be to review government and donor agency policies and priorities relating to rural development, decide on priority sectors and geographical areas for intervention, avoid overlap and ensure cross-fertilization of activities.

23. The organizations concerned shared the general philosophy advocated to move progressively away from the "top-down, blueprint, supply approach" towards a "more decentralized, flexible, participating, learning-process, demand approach". As already stated above, the latter approach has recently

been given increasing consideration in promoting rural development activities within the United Nations system.

24. Members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination generally viewed the recommendation to involve more non-governmental organizations in the implementation of rural development projects and to channel more funds through them as a step in the right direction. However, they expressed some caution regarding channelling the funds of the United Nations system through non-governmental organizations and drew attention to unfortunate experiences that had taken place in some developing countries.

25. As a second alternative the report recommends the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)/World Food Programme (WFP) approach. Members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination supported the approach that UNICEF and WFP apply to their own rural development activities, but were of the view that there were limits to the general application of the UNICEF/WFP approach throughout the United Nations system.

26. As a third alternative, the report recommends providing progressive support to grass-roots organizations or groupings. Members of the Committee could support the intention and general philosophy of this alternative, but they were not convinced that that approach would entail adjustments in present programming systems, essentially "for greater flexibility and for the disbursement of funds not on the basis of projects rigidly designed in advance". They also pointed out that the organizations of the United Nations system have a limited capacity to negotiate "directly either with the organizations or groups of actual beneficiaries or with the established local authorities" and that the prior authorization by, or "framework agreements" with, the central Government would be a prerequisite to such direct negotiations with actual beneficiaries. Therefore, the implementation of this recommendation would very much depend on the willingness of the Governments to accept it. Finally, the recommendation contained little mention of the recipient Government's own role and responsibility in overall project design, and no development activities within a country could ignore the role of the Government.

27. With regard to the proposed rural development coordinating committee, the organizations concerned observed that the proposal to establish this additional mechanism might contradict the general philosophy of the third alternative above, namely, "maximum decentralization so as to cut the number of intermediaries down to a minimum". In addition, it should be borne in mind that there already existed certain coordinating mechanisms at the field level, namely, those implemented under the leadership of the resident coordinators, the World Bank or bilateral agencies and Governments themselves. Members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination therefore were not convinced of the merits of that particular proposal, but were rather of the view that effective coordination should be ensured through ad hoc arrangements or through the existing mechanisms as best fit local situations, emphasizing at the same time that coordination was the main role and responsibility of the Governments.

Recommendation 4: The grant element in the project approach often has de-mobilizing effects for popular participation. It is therefore recommended that more experience be gained with rural development activities that involve at least a partial financial commitment of beneficiaries (e.g. loans, credit schemes, revolving funds) in addition to contributions in kind. Amounts accrued through such activities should be used as seed money for new activities.

28. The organizations concerned will report on the implementation of this recommendation as they gain more experience with rural development activities that involve at least a partial financial commitment on the part of beneficiaries.

Recommendation 5: New professionals. The eventual implementation of recommendations 3 and 4 would require probably less expatriate personnel but also a new type of professional with a multidisciplinary rather than compartmentalized technical specialization. Appropriate recruitment procedures and training packages will have to be defined.

29. The organizations concerned felt that the recommendation concerning the reduction of expatriate personnel could be endorsed in a number of country/sector situations, but not in general terms. With regard to the recommendation concerning a new type of professional staff with multidisciplinary expertise, due attention was being paid to that aspect in the recruitment of professional staff, subject to their specific requirements attached to the eventual assignments.

Recommendation 6: Project documents.

(i) All project documents for rural development activities should contain specific information on beneficiaries and on who will gain and who will lose from the project. The possible effects of the project on local social stratification should also be assessed in the project document.

(ii) Project documents should clearly outline the turnover strategy, i.e. what will happen at the end of the project, who will cover running and maintenance costs, whether funds will be generated locally from government sources or through continuing external assistance. The involvement of the beneficiary community in the turnover process - when possible through locally generated funds or through contributions in kind - should specifically be provided for.

30. Members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination agreed with the recommendation that, in broad terms, project documents for rural development activities should include information on beneficiaries. However, they were not clear about the intention of the recommendation that project documents should also include information on "who will gain and who will lose" from the

project, since that point was not elaborated in the main body of the report. Members of the Committee generally agreed with the second part of the recommendation, with the understanding that such a turnover strategy was subject to changes depending on the eventual outcome of the project. The organizations concerned would report on progress in the implementation of the resolution after sufficient experience had been gained.

> Recommendation 7: Project management units should be avoided; projects should be part of local level community-based government structures. The creation of locally based and controlled participating institutions (peasant groups, village cooperatives, youth farms, womens' production groups, etc.) should be more systematically encouraged.

31. Members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination supported the intention of this recommendation; however, most of them did not subscribe to the view that "project management units" should be invariably avoided, but accepted that they should increasingly reflect local circumstances and opportunities.

> Recommendation 8: While it is recognized that, particularly in least developed countries, specialized expatriate personnel continue to be necessary in some projects both for direct project implementation and on-the-job training, the Inspectors recommend that expatriates should become the exception rather than the rule in rural development projects. When they are employed they should be "advisers" rather than "directors". More emphasis to be placed on recruitment of more rural development multidisciplinary "generalists" rather than specialized technicians who may be less sensitive to the social aspects of rural development. Measures should be taken to avoid ostentatious behaviour by experts.

32. Since this recommendation largely repeats recommendation 5, the above comments under recommendation 5 also apply.

> Recommendation 9: More attention should be given to the smooth integration of the technical and social aspects of projects in order to avoid the establishment of "islands of progress" separated from local realities. Prestige equipment should also be avoided.

33. The organizations concerned supported this recommendation, which reflects a general belief widely held by the organizations of the United Nations system, but observed that the recommendation had been formulated without substantiation in the main body of the report.

> Recommendation 10: Realistic planning and implementation. In order to maximize the chances of success of rural development activities, the following measures should be introduced:

(i) The intended beneficiaries should be involved in the identification and planning stages. Their support to project objectives and strategy should be secured before the project is approved. Beneficiaries should be fully involved throughout the life of the project.

(ii) Planning and implementation procedures should be realistic, flexible and decentralized. Such procedures should allow for:

- More lead time at the beginning of projects to ensure smooth implementation and longer project life spans (in particular longer "phasing out" periods);

- Continuous re-planning of activities on the basis of successes and constraints and as "the horizon lights up". More decentralized budgetary autonomy should be given to local agency representatives;

- Simplified reporting procedures focusing on results rather than on inputs and outputs;

(iii) In order to lighten the administrative burden of the recipient Government, decentralization of national project support and monitoring functions from the central to the regional or district levels should be encouraged whenever possible.

34. Members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination fully agreed upon all the three measures suggested under this recommendation; they were already paying due attention to the recommended measures and taking them into account, whenever possible, in their rural development activities. Further progress in the implementation of the resolution will be reported in the light of experience gained.

Recommendation 11: Evaluation. More ex-post evaluations should be conducted in order to learn more about the impact and sustainability of rural development projects. A provision for ex-post evaluation should be included in project budgets of all large-scale projects. If funding of individual ex-post project evaluations cannot be secured, more thematic evaluations of clusters of similar projects should be conducted.

35. The organizations concerned welcomed this recommendation. However, the impact of its implementation could only be assessed in the light of experience gained and would be reported on at a later stage.

III. REVIEW OF UNITED NATIONS PUBLIC INFORMATION NETWORKS: REORGANIZATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

36. A report on this subject was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session (see A/44/433). The report contained six recommendations addressed to the Department of Public Information. The related comments of

the Secretary-General are contained in document A/44/433/Add.1. By its resolution 44/50 of 8 December 1989, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit and the comments of the Secretary-General thereon.

Recommendation I: The management of the Department of Public Information should be rationalized and the Department made to function more efficiently:

(a) By eliminating the Division for Committee Liaison and Administrative Services so as to separate the administrative and financial functions of a conventional management unit from those of an "executive office", which, in accordance with recommendation 40 of the Group of Experts, should always be consolidated into the office of the head of department in a compact and streamlined unit.

(b) By incorporating the Office of the Under-Secretary-General in the Executive Office as thus modified, giving it those resources and officials of the Bureau for Programme Operations which it is felt useful to retain.

(c) By establishing an administrative and financial unit.

(d) By attaching the Evaluation Unit to the Executive Office in such a manner as to retain its necessary independence of evaluation and judgement.

(e) By clarifying the role of the person who appears to be acting as deputy spokesman for the Secretary-General, in terms of the responsibilities and powers of the present Director of the United Nations Information Centre at Washington (United States of America).

37. This recommendation has been fully implemented as recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit. The previous posts of Director of the Division for Committee Liaison and Administrative Services and the Bureau for Programme Operations and their corresponding organizational units have been eliminated. In their place a post of Director, Office of the Under-Secretary-General, has been established. Further, the Executive Office and Programme Evaluation and Communications Research Unit as well as the Committee Liaison Unit are now attached directly to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General.

38. The posts of the spokesman and the deputy spokesperson continue to remain in the Executive Media Service. There have not been any changes in the responsibilities of the two officials.

Recommendation II: Autonomous status should again be given to the Committee secretariat, which has an important role to play in defining, pursuing and harmonizing the information policies for which the Joint United Nations Information Committee provides the framework and focal point:

(a) By considering practical means of linking the Committee secretariat with the Executive Office, having regard to the dual policy and technical role that it retains.

(b) By making an exploratory study of the establishment of an advisory unit within the Joint United Nations Information Committee, which would help to coordinate public information policies in accordance with the draft action plan submitted to the Joint Committee at its fifteenth session.

39. This recommendation has been fully implemented. Under the new structure of the Department, secretariat services for the Joint United Nations Information Committee and the Committee on Information are now provided by the Director, Office of the Under-Secretary-General, who serves as the Secretary of both the Committees, assisted by two Professional officers.

40. The establishment of an advisory unit within the Joint United Nations Information Committee, which would help coordinate public information policies in accordance with the draft action plan submitted to the Joint Committee at its fifteenth session, represents an inter-agency matter and the United Nations will be ready to participate jointly with other members of the Joint Committee in implementing this part of the recommendation.

Recommendation III: The Communications and Project Management Service should be reorganized and its machinery should be made more productive:

(a) By eliminating the Communications Services Section of the Service, as recommended by the Post Review Group, and by transferring its functions to a new management office to be placed under the authority of the Director of the Service.

(b) By assigning to the Director of the Service, thus provided with greater resources, the task of programme formulation and coordination, in liaison with the project managers of the theme-oriented sections.

(c) By clarifying the relations between the Communications and Project Management Service and the Information Product Division so as to maintain between them a strict and effective separation of promotion and production functions.

41. The recommendation has been fully implemented. The Communications and Project Management Division has been reorganized. Under the new structure, the Division is responsible for promotional services of the Department. These include institutional promotion, peace, security and disarmament, the struggle

against apartheid, the question of Palestine, self-determination and decolonization, human rights, economic and social development, the environment, drug abuse, the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, women and youth, promotion of global awareness of the critical economic situation in Africa, communications strategies and institutional reference.

42. As stated in paragraph 14 of the addendum to the note of the Secretary-General (A/44/433/Add.1), the Communications Services Section in the Communications and Project Management Division continues to function as an "in-house agency" responsible for supervising the technical capabilities of the Division, including art design, layout and production, staff writers assigned to campaigns and projects within thematic units, print production related to topical campaigns, public announcements, co-productions, exhibits and so on. This arrangement will continue and there is no plan to transfer its functions to the Director of the Division.

43. Under the new structure of the Department, the responsibilities of the Communications and Project Management Division and the Information Products Division remain distinct though not totally mutually exclusive. In certain areas, for instance, in that of printed materials, the Communications and Project Management Division continues to be responsible for short-length, non-recurring and topical material, while the Information Product Division has responsibility for recurrent publications.

Recommendation IV: There should be a complete reorganization of the functions of the Department of Public Information and of its staff concerned with dissemination and external affairs:

(a) By doing away with the Dissemination Division, which at present duplicates the work of the Information Centres Division.

(b) By attaching the Institutional Relations and NGO Section of the Dissemination Division to the Information Centres Division and by transferring to the NGO Section the functions of its Information Dissemination Service, which are carried out for the non-governmental organizations.

(c) By assigning the functions of the thus reduced Dissemination Service to the Information Centres Division, and by distributing them as necessary between the units of that Division.

(d) By incorporating the Dissemination Division's Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit in the Office of the spokesman for the Secretary-General.

(e) By incorporating the Public Services Section in the administrative and financial unit referred to in recommendation I (c), in the Communications and Project Management Service or in the Information Centres Division.

44. The Secretary-General has given his views on this matter in paragraphs 16-20 of document A/44/433/Add.1. Under the current structure of the Department, the Dissemination Division is maintained as a distinct entity responsible for dissemination services, media accreditation, institutional relations and non-governmental organizations, public services and external publications.

Recommendation V: Recommendation 37 of the Group of Experts, which calls for the consolidation of all information activities in the Department of Public Information, should be implemented "to the extent possible"; a further review of the question should be undertaken "no later than 1992" and certain guidelines should be formulated, the provisional aim of which should be:

(a) To retain the present system of distribution of information functions between the Department of Public Information and the bodies responsible for the promotion of resolutions on "priority" issues (Namibia, Palestine, apartheid).

(b) To reserve production of all written information to the bodies responsible for the promotion of resolutions on "fundamental" issues (transnational corporations, disarmament, development, human rights) and to exclude the dissemination of similar products from the Department's subprogrammes.

(c) To specify the conditions and methods for provision of audiovisual information on both "fundamental" and "priority" issues, which is and should be primarily the responsibility of the Department of Public Information.

45. The Secretary-General intends to complete the review in 1991.

Recommendation VI: There should be arbitration of the question of the parallel and concurrent publications, Development Forum, published by the Department of Public Information, and World Development, published by UNDP, and, should Development Forum receive preference, the Committee's secretariat should be given exclusive responsibility for it.

46. The difference between the two publications is pointed out in paragraph 27 of the note by the Secretary-General (A/44/433/Add.1). World Development is a feature-type magazine that describes the successful development projects of UNDP and is distributed freely with a view to increasing public awareness of the scope and effectiveness of the activities of UNDP. On the other hand, Development Forum is a sales publication of the Department of Public Information, which covers news items, interviews with experts and United Nations officials, opinion pieces and analyses of major development issues and so on. Periodic consultations between UNDP and the Department of Public Information will be held to avoid any problems of overlap or duplication.

IV. REVIEW OF UNITED NATIONS PUBLIC INFORMATION NETWORKS: UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRES

47. A report on this subject was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session (see A/44/329). The report contained six recommendations addressed to the Secretary-General. The related comments of the Secretary-General are contained in document A/44/329/Add.1. In section VI of its resolution 44/201 A of 21 December 1989, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit and the related comments of the Secretary-General.

Recommendation 1: Promote media production, which, whatever the communication channel employed, takes increasingly into account the distinctions between types of audience and targets and between press intermediaries and final recipients or consumers (non-governmental organizations, universities, Governments, the general public):

(a) By addressing to the Directors of United Nations information centres and services or of outposts thereof a questionnaire emphasizing less the weaknesses and strengths of the structures concerned than the mobilizing effect and the impact within their sphere of competence of the topics highlighted in the resolutions of the General Assembly;

(b) By requesting the aforementioned officials to draw up succinct periodic tables showing the locally available media resources and the proportion provided by national inputs, print runs and numbers of readers, expectations and needs. To these should be added, if appropriate, summaries of the studies carried out on the subject within their sphere of competence;

(c) By taking care to obtain detailed statistics for, and to regulate shipments of documents from the Department of Public Information and other Secretariat bodies so as to ensure dissemination that is more selective, more economical and more mindful of the reality of the intake structures in the receiving countries.

48. This recommendation is being implemented continuously. The Department and the United Nations information centres work together in undertaking a constant review of issues specified by the General Assembly for priority promotion, the variety of material to be produced for each topic with attention given to its relevance for the region, the identification of targets and audiences for material produced by the Department of Public Information at Headquarters and locally by the centres, the maintenance of updated mailing lists by subject, and the timely shipment of documents and materials from the Department to ensure extensive and effective utilization by local recipients.

49. In addition, the Department of Public Information disseminates a variety of printed information to UNDP offices and audiovisual material directly to broadcasting organizations in countries where there are no United Nations

information centres in order to ensure timely receipt and extensive usage of material produced by the Department.

50. The Department in 1990 produced a World Media Handbook as a reference tool, the first edition containing a summary of selected media and related data covering countries that host the network of 67 United Nations information centres and services. Suitable follow-up action is being taken to produce periodic updates of the publication, which would include additional data and cover all countries as may be feasible.

Recommendation II: Implement the recommendation put forward by the Joint Inspection Unit in its report JIU/REP/79 whereby he was invited to allow United Nations associations, UNESCO and United Nations clubs to participate, on an experimental basis and under contractual agreements, in the information work of United Nations information centres:

(a) By helping to strengthen United Nations associations already endowed with coherent structures and by drawing up a map of the United Nations information centres and their outposts, bearing in mind the dynamism of the said United Nations associations, in order, in certain cases and certain countries, either to have them play to the full the role of relays or to substitute them for United Nations information centres;

(b) By setting up, as a pilot experiment, in Jamaica and in Canada Department of Public Information outposts having a locally recruited information officer to serve as liaison officer and technical adviser to the United Nations associations at Kingston and Ottawa;

(c) By, where appropriate, extending to the UNICEF National Committees the recommendation that the Joint Inspection Unit limited, in 1979, to United Nations associations and UNESCO and United Nations clubs.

51. The United Nations information centres have been strengthening their cooperation with United Nations associations, other non-governmental organizations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), local United Nations clubs and national educational institutions in promoting a wider public awareness and understanding of the United Nations.

52. Educational information, including stimulating and sustaining the interest of the academic and intellectual communities, has been and continues to be highlighted. United Nations information centres arrange to have studies on the United Nations as part of the regular national curriculum, and Directors of the centres are encouraged to participate more widely in lectures and other public speaking activities.

53. In some instances the Department of Public Information has initiated joint projects with commercial companies for the production of audiovisual and print packages for use by educational institutions in teaching about priority topics highlighted by the General Assembly.

Recommendation III: To undertake an overall review of the plan for the redefinition and distribution of the United Nations Information Centres and to delimit more clearly the functions and spheres of competence of the services, centres and outposts with a view to adapting them more closely to national contexts, and to redraw their map accordingly:

(a) By siting at Harare rather than Lusaka the Information Centre with regional competence for southern Africa;

(b) By establishing at Tunis an outpost rather than a centre, in the light of the measures taken regarding the maintenance of the Rabat Centre;

(c) By maintaining at Port of Spain the United Nations Information Centre with subregional competence for the Caribbean;

(d) By establishing outposts of the Rio de Janeiro United Nations Information Centre in the Brazilian context, at São Paulo and Pôrto Alegre;

(e) By establishing outposts of the New Delhi United Nations Information Centre not only at Dhaka, Colombo and Kathmandu, but also in India, at Bombay, Madras, Bangalore and/or Calcutta;

(f) By closing the United Nations Information Centres at Athens, Prague and Lisbon;

(g) By closing the United Nations Information Centres in Paris and Rome while establishing at Brussels a United Nations Information Centre with European competence;

(h) By undertaking a special study of the situation of the Information Services at Geneva and Vienna in the light of the specific nature of the structures of the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna.

54. The present network of information centres has been established on the basis of General Assembly resolutions and recommendations. In some instances, the Assembly itself selected the location of a centre and in other instances it acted on the recommendation of the Committee of Information. Further, all United Nations information centres have been established with the agreement of host Governments.

55. Periodic review of United Nations information centres is undertaken by the Committee on Information and other relevant intergovernmental organs and bodies of the General Assembly. A detailed report on United Nations information centres was submitted by the Department of Public Information as a conference room paper at the request of the thirteenth session of the Committee on Information (4-19 April 1991) and a special meeting of the Working Group of the Committee focused on the recommendations of the Committee

and other relevant organs to maintain, strengthen and enhance the present network of United Nations information centres within available resources.

56. It is the General Assembly, acting upon the recommendation of the Committee on Information and the request of a Member State, which recommends the location for the establishment of new information centres and it is the prerogative of the General Assembly to recommend the relocation or closure of existing United Nations information centres.

Recommendation IV: Organize closer cooperation and more sustained dialogue among the field offices of the Department of Public Information, those of UNDP, if appropriate, those of specialized agencies:

(a) By establishing the detail and type of descending and rising information of which communication from one field service to another would be declared mandatory;

(b) By drawing up a framework agreement to govern the apportionment of the contributions necessary for the pooling of premises and equipment;

(c) By spelling out the set of administrative and hierarchical relations that should govern the dealings between the Director of an information centre and the UNDP deputy resident representative and between the head of a Department of Public Information outpost, his United Nations information centre director and the UNDP resident representative;

(d) By institutionalizing the unofficial or optional system of regular on-the-spot meetings between the UNDP resident representative, the United Nations information centre director and the representatives of specialized agencies.

57. The relationship between the information centres and UNDP field offices has merited special attention. An initial understanding was reached jointly in 1990, tested in the field and finalized by the end of the year. A significant aspect of the closer partnership is that UNDP resident representatives serve concurrently as director/acting director of 22 United Nations information centres. Further, in a complementary measure, and with the active support of the Director-General of the Office for Economic Cooperation and Development, those UNDP resident representatives who are resident coordinators in developing countries receive intensive public information briefings before taking up their functions. This would be of particular significance in countries where there are no information centres.

58. Directives to information centres to work closely in the field with UNDP resident representative and other members of the United Nations family have had a visible impact not only in portraying a unified United Nations image but also in pooling resources. Examples include sharing common office premises wherever practical and, in some instances, sharing of common reference library services.

59. Representatives of UNDP and the agencies are invited to participate in annual regional meetings of centre directors organized by the Department.

60. This cooperation, including the financial aspects, continues to be pursued further directly with each member of the United Nations family and through the Joint United Nations Information Committee.

Recommendation V: Improve the operation and management of United Nations information centres and services:

(a) By abandoning the mandatory limit of four years on a director's stay in the same information centre;

(b) By accelerating the generalization of the electronic mail system;

(c) By pursuing the effort to persuade the Governments of host countries to take responsibility for the rents of the premises of information centres or to make buildings available to them free of charge;

(d) By, in the context of an unaltered budgetary allotment, making savings on posts for documentation and the shipment of written publications while strengthening the means of financing travel by the heads of information services and centres;

(e) By grouping obligatory commemorations as indicated in paragraphs 107-110 of the report.

61. The Department continues to undertake a regular review of the recommendation as feasible and has undertaken a wide range of initiatives to enhance and strengthen the operation of United Nations information centres within its limited financial resources, keeping in mind the recommendations of the Committee on Information and General Assembly mandates on public information.

62. The rotation of centre directors has been at the core of the programme to enhance United Nations information centres. Within the last four years, 89 per cent of the centres had new directors, and at least 20 persons have been either appointed or rotated during the past 12-month period.

63. Initiatives taken by the Department include modernizing communication links with Headquarters and among field offices. More than 59 centres have fully operational facsimile machines, 34 have personal computers and printers, and 22 are connected to Headquarters with electronic mail system. Before the end of the year, more than 50 United Nations information centres will have personal computers and printers, and it is envisaged that another dozen or so centres will be connected to the electronic mail system.

64. The aspect of suitable host Government support for the information centres, requested in General Assembly resolution 1405 (XIV) of

1 December 1959, continues to be pursued vigorously. In addition to seeking the financial and practical support of all host Governments, particularly those which do not provide such support at the present time, the Department has taken specific measures to deal with the situation by setting out procedures for requesting the establishment of new United Nations information centres and information components, including signed agreements stipulating assistance to be provided by host Governments.

65. Because of the continuing climate of budgetary restraint, the Secretariat has taken the position that the establishment of a centre must be predicated upon the approval by the General Assembly of additional financial and staff resources to make it fully operational. In addition, the practical and financial support of the host Government has become an essential prerequisite. Therefore, the Department has taken specific measures to deal with the situation by setting out procedures for requesting the establishment of new United Nations information centres and information components, including signed agreements stipulating assistance to be provided by host Governments.

66. The availability of resources allocated for United Nations information centres under the regular budget of the United Nations is the key factor in determining the range and scope of activities of the information centres. With the greatest difficulty, the Department attempts to ameliorate to the maximum extent possible the adverse impact of limited resources through a combination of actions. They include redefining and reassigning staff functions, greater emphasis on staff training and extensive use of technological innovations to increase productivity and improve the timeliness of delivery. The Department also makes constant and regular review of requirements, staffing and allocations for individual centres and takes prompt action to fill vacancies as they occur.

67. The Department continues to arrange and even accelerate the regional meeting of centre directors and has intensified training seminars for some local staff of the centres, such as information assistants, reference assistants and administrative assistants of self-accounting centres. In addition, the Department is taking measures to enable local staff to participate in various training programmes organized by local institutions in order to strengthen their professional knowledge.

Recommendation VI: Simplify and supplement the system for drafting and dispatching the reports that information centres submit to the Department of Public Information headquarters and the Office for Research and the Collection of Information:

(a) By adopting a six-monthly rhythm for the submission of the traditional progress reports and by placing the emphasis in these reports on the aspect of self-evaluation;

(b) By doing away with separate reports on each United Nations commemoration and by including the comments on such commemorations in the above-mentioned six-monthly report;

(c) By converting what is now a weekly report to the Office for Research and the Collection of Information into a monthly report, subject to the notification of the Office by telex on the occurrence of an event of vital interest for the United Nations;

(d) By doing away with the summary of weekly news by basing it on the above-mentioned report, which would become a monthly document and be transmitted in two copies to the Department of Public Information and the Office for Research and the Collection of Information;

(e) By establishing at the Department of Public Information headquarters and within the framework of the information centres a consolidated annual report that would summarize all the activities of the services, centres and outposts while highlighting the salient events, the most important developments and the most significant figures.

68. This recommendation is taken into account in upgrading the system of reporting. The Department's Programme Evaluation and Communications Research Unit, in collaboration with the Information Centres Division, has been formulating feedback questionnaires and forms to ensure that reports submitted by the centres are as comprehensive as possible and are received in time to meet various Secretariat deadlines.

69. Joint efforts are undertaken to make reports submitted by centres to the Office for Research and the Collection of Information more concise and informative.

V. PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES AIMED AT A MORE EQUITABLE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SOURCES OF PROCUREMENT FOR TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROJECTS

70. A report on this subject was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session (see A/44/646). The report contained five recommendations addressed to the General Assembly, UNDP Governing Council and executive heads of executing agencies. The related comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination are contained in document A/45/648.

Recommendation 1: The general objective must be made specific through quantification so that the system can set its sights on, and, having developed and introduced the most appropriate tactics, move towards a defined target. The General Assembly and/or the UNDP Governing Council should establish specific procurement targets for both the developing countries and the underutilized major donor countries.

71. The organizations concerned did not agree with this recommendation. They felt that while the setting of annual procurement targets might have some merit, it would be difficult to set targets by agency, region or country, and that it would be preferable to set targets for the system as a whole.

In due course, however, better information on, and the greater availability of, quality products that could compete on the open market might enable the system to adopt country targets.

> Recommendation 2: The principal effort must be demand-oriented. The attitude of Governments, international personnel and national project managers towards goods and services from developing countries must change. UNDP and its executing agencies should develop a joint strategy to alter the attitudes of Governments and international project personnel as described in paragraph 34.

72. The organizations concerned welcomed the discussion of attitudinal barriers contained in the report and agreed on the need for a joint strategy. The Inter-Agency Procurement and Supply Office drafted guidelines for headquarters and field staff of organizations of the system, scheduled for review by the organizations members of the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) at its second regular session of 1991, which contain elements aimed at overcoming such attitudinal barriers. At the same time, the organizations felt that it was necessary to improve the quality of goods and services from developing and underutilized major donor countries through better testing and in-country quality control and through training and capacity-building, and specific measures have been taken to that end.

> Recommendation 3: A number of common-user products should be selected immediately for target purchasing.

73. The organizations concerned had no difficulty in principle with the concept of common-user products, although several of them pointed out that their activities were of such a specialized nature as to make the identification of common-user products difficult.

> Recommendation 4: There should be a reaffirmation by the executive heads of the organizations of their commitment to the objective established and this commitment should be made known to those intimately concerned with carrying out actions to solve the problem, in particular to technical staff of Headquarters' substantive departments and to international project staff, both of which groups can influence procurement directly, and to procurement officers.

74. The organizations concerned agreed with this recommendation and have issued specific directives for that purpose. The draft guidelines of the Inter-Agency Procurement and Supply Office mentioned above under recommendation 2 also pursue that objective.

Recommendation 5: Executing agencies must ensure that their database includes information on the country of origin of goods and services procured. Such information should be sought from suppliers as a regular feature of the procurement action.

75. The organizations concerned agreed with this recommendation, and the draft guidelines of the Inter-Agency Procurement and Supply Office under consideration contain several provisions to that end. Such information is also included in the country-specific catalogues prepared by the Office on the basis of information provided by the agencies. The Office also proposed that the databases of the different agencies be standardized and linked together.

VI. FROM THE OPTICAL DISC PILOT PROJECT AT THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA TO AN OPTICAL DISC SYSTEM FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

76. A report on this subject was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session (see A/44/684). The related comments of the Secretary-General are contained in document A/44/684/Add.1. The relevant recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions are contained in document A/44/7/Add.6. In section XVI, II, of its resolution 44/201 B of 21 December 1989, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit and of the comments of the Secretary-General and requested the Secretary-General to implement the optical disc system as outlined by the Joint Inspection Unit, in accordance with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and taking into account the views expressed by Member States at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly. By the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report containing a comprehensive plan on a full implementation of this system, including at the regional commissions and other duty stations, its impact on the availability of documents to Member States, a cost-benefit analysis and other relevant technical and financial issues, and to submit it to the Assembly at its forty-fifth session. In response to that request, the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/45/58) was submitted to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, which, in section XIV of its resolution 45/248 A of 21 December 1990 deferred until its forty-sixth session consideration of that report of the Secretary-General, requested the Secretariat to carry out consultations with the permanent missions in order to determine the appropriateness of making the system compatible with those of permanent missions and to report thereon to the Assembly at its forty-sixth session, and empowered the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to authorize the Secretary-General to enter into commitments for additional requirements necessary for 1991 on the understanding that such appropriations as might be necessary for 1991 would have first call on the contingency fund for 1990-1991 at the forty-sixth session. The comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on the report of the Secretary-General are communicated in document A/46/88 and Corr.1.

77. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit contained three recommendations, two of which were specifically addressed to the United Nations and a third addressed to other organizations of the United Nations common system encouraging them to consider installing their own optical disc systems, using the results of the United Nations pilot project and ensuring the most cost-effective configuration compatible with the systems installed in the United Nations Secretariat and the permanent missions of Member States. Since the United Nations system has not yet been established, it seems premature to report on the implementation of the third recommendation of the report. The information provided here therefore concentrates on the implementation of recommendations 1 and 2 of the report.

> Recommendation 1: A fully operational optical disc system for storage and retrieval of recent and future documentation should be installed in the United Nations Secretariat. The General Assembly may wish to provide in the 1990-1991 budget appropriate resources for such a system.

78. In section XIV of its resolution 45/248 on questions relating to the programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991, the General Assembly:

> "1. Decides to defer until its forty-sixth session consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the optical disc storage and retrieval system;
>
> "2. Requests the Secretariat to carry out consultations with the permanent missions in order to determine the appropriateness of making the system compatible with those of the permanent missions and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session;
>
> "3. Empowers the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to authorize the Secretary-General to enter into commitments for additional requirements necessary for 1991 on the understanding that such appropriations as may be necessary for 1991 would have first call on the contingency fund for 1990-1991 at the forty-fifth session."

79. The Secretariat has circulated a questionnaire to all permanent missions to the United Nations in New York concerning the use of computers by the missions and the intentions of the missions relating to the use of the proposed optical disc system. The analysis of replies received and consequent recommendations with respect to the establishment of the optical disc system will be presented in the detailed report on the optical disc project to be submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session. While a final decision has not yet been taken concerning the supplier of the optical disc system to be installed at United Nations Headquarters and at the United Nations Office at Geneva, a comparison of the proposals received from vendors with replies to the questionnaire sent to permanent missions indicates that any system installed would be fully compatible with the computer hardware and software used by most of the permanent missions.

80. In his report to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session (A/C.5/45/58), the Secretary-General proposed the phased implementation of a project to establish a fully operational optical disc system for storage and retrieval of parliamentary documents in the United Nations. In the first phase, to be carried out in 1990-1991, a fully operational system is to be placed in service at the United Nations Office at Geneva and a limited system, primarily for the input of documents, is to be installed at United Nations Headquarters. In the second phase, during the biennium 1992-1993, the system is to be made fully operational in New York, and in the third phase, to be implemented during the biennium 1994-1995, the system is to be expanded to include the United Nations Office at Vienna, the regional commissions, Nairobi and other selected United Nations duty stations as well as to provide world-wide access through public networks to Member States and other users of United Nations parliamentary documents. The first phase activities have begun and provisions for the second phase of the project are included in the programme budget proposals of the Secretary-General for the biennium 1992-1993.

81. A request for proposals for the implementation of the first phase of the project was issued in November 1990 and proposals were received in mid-February 1991. The evaluation of proposals is now under way and it is expected that a contract will be awarded to the successful vendor by mid-year, with installation of the fully operational system in the second half of the year. The detailed programme of implementation of the first and second phases of the project will be set out in the report on the optical disc project to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session.

> Recommendation 2: Should the General Assembly adopt recommendation 1 and United Nations Secretariat in-house resources prove insufficient, it may wish to consider the possibility of contracting out the inputting on optical discs of all existing United Nations documentation, which will allow the preservation of the institutional memory of the Organization, the ready availability of all United Nations documentation and substantial additional savings.

82. There are clear advantages to storing all existing United Nations parliamentary documentation on the optical disc system in order to preserve the institutional memory of the Organization and to enhance the accessibility of such documentation. Once the system has been established at Geneva and New York, the workload and resource requirements will be analysed and a programme will be elaborated for the inputting of previously issued parliamentary documentation, using contractual services for the optical scanning of documents.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/45/16), Part I, paras. 334-343.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/38/38), Part I, para. 189.

3/ Ibid., para. 190.

4/ "Strengthening the capacity of the United Nations evaluation units and systems and timetable for review of evaluation programmes requested under General Assembly resolutions 36/228 B and 37/234, section II" (A/38/133); "Strengthening the capacity of the United Nations evaluation units and systems" (A/C.5/39/45); and "Strengthening the capacity of the United Nations evaluation units and system" (A/41/670).